

Safe toys are no accident

When toys are poorly designed or misused, harmless playthings can spell disaster.

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) urges parents to take an active role in playtime activities.

By following these basic guidelines, playtime can be fun, educational—and SAFE.

Selecting toys

Choose the right toy for the right child. When toy shopping, read labels carefully and follow age recommendations. Remember, the toy industry does extensive research on child development to set these guidelines.

Infant toys, such as rattles, squeeze toys, and teethingers, should be big enough so they

can't lodge in the child's throat.

Avoid infant toys with long strings or ropes. They can easily entangle or even strangle small children.

Young children enjoy bright colored, lightweight toys. Choose unbreakable toys without small parts such as removable eyes or limbs.

Toys made from metal or glass are for older children. So are pointy objects such as play tools.

Even innocent playthings like balloons cause injuries or even death. They are a deadly choking hazard for children under 3 years old.

Electric toys are for children over 8 years old. Trains, miniature stoves, sewing machines, etc., can cause serious burns or shock if toys are old, damaged or misused.

Always supervise children using electric toys.

Look for quality design and construction. Poorly constructed toys or those made from cheap materials may break easily, leaving sharp edges, wires or pieces that can hurt children.

Select toys with proper safety features.

Choose toys that are non-flammable, flame resistant, painted with non-toxic paint, and/or made from washable/hygienic materials.

Look for safety features and/or warnings listed on the label.

Select arrows or darts with soft cork tips, rubber suction cups or other protective tips. Such toys are only for older children.

Avoid dart guns, sling shots and other toys capable of

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firing small objects. They can cause blinding eye injuries.

Inspecting Toys

Inspect toys monthly to make sure toys are in good condition for safe play.

Watch for sharp points and edges.

Toys may have wires and metal parts that can hurt children. These points can emerge as the toy ages, making a child's favorite toy a potential danger.

Check for small broken parts.

Routinely inspect toys to make sure parts are not broken, exposing smaller pieces, screws or metal pieces that could be swallowed.

Throw away unsafe toys where children cannot find them. Do not save unsafe toys for rummage sales or

pass them on to other children.

Using and Storing Toys

Teach your child how to use the toy properly and safely.

Many accidents are a result of normally safe toys used for the wrong purpose or in unsafe conditions. There is no substitute for adult supervision.

Explain the importance of proper toy care and storage. Left on the floor, toys may be stepped on and easily broken. This leads to potential hazards from damaged toys and small broken parts.

Let older children know their responsibilities. If children are in different age groups, older siblings need to keep their toys out of reach of curious youngsters.

Separate toys into different rooms or shelves out of reach

to curious young children. A safe toy for a 5-year-old may be a killer for a toddler.

Finally, have fun!

Playtime is a very important learning activity for young children. It's time for experimenting, exploring, and experiencing a new and exciting world. With a little thought and a few safety precautions, both parents and children can have a great—and safe—playtime.

For more information or to file a complaint, contact the Bureau of Consumer Protection:

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